

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 16, 2011

President Barack Obama  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are calling on you to address an impending crisis that could exacerbate the famine in the Horn of Africa. We are concerned that remittances from U.S. residents to Somalia, which provide vital support to those in desperate need, could effectively be cut off in the next two weeks. We request that the Administration hold an inter-agency meeting to explore solutions that keep this critical lifeline open.

While always important, remittances to Somalia are now more crucial than ever because of the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Somalia. The U.S. Treasury estimates that Somali-Americans send home more than \$100 million to Somalia each year. These remittances are the primary source of income for many families in Somalia.

Most U.S. banks have shut down their Somali remittance services in recent years to avoid any possible connection to terrorism financing, such as to the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. Now, what may be the last U.S. bank to offer a transparent remittance service to Somalia is considering terminating that service on December 30, 2011. Because the bank is located in Minneapolis, which has the largest Somali-American population in the U.S., ending this service could have far reaching consequences in the Horn of Africa.

Obviously we do not want to impede the important work federal investigators and prosecutors are doing to fight terrorism financing, and we recognize that Somali money transfers pose significant regulatory challenges. However, given the urgency of this issue and the severity of the humanitarian crisis, we are confident that a solution can be identified that both allows for the continuation of remittances while also reinforcing policies to prevent and prosecute terrorism financing.

We appreciate everything your Administration has done to address the famine and hope that the inter-agency group will meet next week to address this time sensitive issue.

Thank you for making the famine in the Horn of Africa a priority for your Administration.

Sincerely,



KEITH ELLISON  
Member of Congress



DONALD PAYNE  
Member of Congress

cc: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner